

**IN THE CLAIMS**

The current claims follow. For claims not marked as amended in this response, any difference in the claims below and the previous state of the claims is unintentional and in the nature of a typographical error.

1. (Currently Amended) A router for interconnecting external devices coupled to said router, said router comprising:

a switch fabric; and

a plurality of routing nodes coupled to said switch fabric, wherein each of said plurality of routing nodes comprises: i) packet processing circuitry configured to exchange data packets with external devices and to exchange data packets with other ones of said plurality of routing nodes via said switch fabric and ii) control processing circuitry configured to perform control and management functions, wherein said control processing circuitry comprises:

a first network processor configured to perform a first group of control and management functions, wherein the control and management functions in the first group are determined based on contents of a first configuration register of the first network processor; and

a second network processor configured to perform a second group of control and management functions, wherein the control and management functions in the second group are determined based on contents of a second configuration register of the second network processor,

wherein said first network processor determines the first group of control and management

functions allocated to said first network processor by examining the first configuration register,

wherein said second network processor determines the second group of control and management functions allocated to said second network processor by examining the second configuration register,

wherein a first one of said control and management functions may be re-allocated from said first group of control and management functions to said second group of control and management functions by modifying the contents of said first configuration register and said second configuration register, and

wherein said first network processor is a master device with respect to said first group of control and management functions and said second network processor is a slave device with respect to said first group of control and management functions.

2. (Original) The router as set forth in Claim 1 wherein said control and management functions are dynamically allocated between said first network processor and said second network processor according to a first level of activity of control and management functions in said first network processor relative to a second level of activity of control and management functions in said second network processor.

3. (Previously Presented) The router as set forth in Claim 2 wherein said first network processor is controlled by first control software code and said second network processor is controlled by second control software code identical to said first control software code.

4-7 (Cancelled)

8. (Currently Amended) The router as set forth in Claim [[7 ]]1 wherein said first network processor is a slave device with respect to said second group of control and management functions and said second network processor is a master device with respect to said second group of control and management functions.

9. (Original) The router as set forth in Claim 8 wherein said first network processor processes data packets being transmitted from said external devices to said switch fabric.

10. (Original) The router as set forth in Claim 9 wherein said second network processor processes data packets being transmitted from said switch fabric to said external devices.

11. (Currently Amended) A communication network comprising a plurality of routers that communicate data packets to one another and to interfacing external devices, each of said plurality of routers comprising:

a switch fabric; and

a plurality of routing nodes coupled to said switch fabric, wherein each of said plurality of routing nodes comprises: i) packet processing circuitry configured to exchange data packets with external devices and to exchange data packets with other ones of said plurality of routing nodes via said switch fabric and ii) control processing circuitry configured to perform control and management functions, wherein said control processing circuitry comprises:

a first network processor configured to perform a first group of control and management functions, wherein the control and management functions in the first group are determined based on contents of a first configuration register of the first network processor; and

a second network processor configured to perform a second group of control and management functions, wherein the control and management functions in the second group are determined based on contents of a second configuration register of the second network processor,

wherein said first network processor determines the first group of control and management functions allocated to said first network processor by examining the first configuration register,

wherein said second network processor determines the second group of control and management functions allocated to said second network processor by examining the second configuration register,

wherein a first one of said control and management functions may be re-allocated from said first group of control and management functions to said second group of control and management functions by modifying the contents of said first configuration register and said second configuration register, and

wherein said first network processor is a master device with respect to said first group of control and management functions and said second network processor is a slave device with respect to said first group of control and management functions.

12. (Original) The communication network as set forth in Claim 11 wherein said control and management functions are dynamically allocated between said first network processor and said second network processor according to a first level of activity of control and management functions in said first network processor relative to a second level of activity of control and management functions in said second network processor.

13. (Previously Presented) The communication network as set forth in Claim 12 wherein said first network processor is controlled by first control software code and said second network processor is controlled by second control software code identical to said first control software code.

14-17. (Cancelled)

18. (Currently Amended) The communication network as set forth in Claim ~~[[17 ]]~~11 wherein said first network processor is a slave device with respect to said second group of control and management functions and said second network processor is a master device with respect to said second group of control and management functions.

19. (Original) The communication network as set forth in Claim 18 wherein said first network processor processes data packets being transmitted from said external devices to said switch fabric.

20. (Original) The communication network as set forth in Claim 19 wherein said second network processor processes data packets being transmitted from said switch fabric to said external devices.

21 -23. (Cancelled)